Domestic Violence Indicators and actions

Source: http://www.domesticviolence.org/intro.html

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Indicators and actions

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Domestic Violence

- Many people who are being abused do not see themselves as victims. Also, abusers do not see themselves as being abusive. People often think of domestic violence as physical violence, such as hitting. However, domestic violence takes other forms, such as psychological, emotional, or sexual abuse.
- Domestic violence is about one person in a relationship using a pattern of behaviors to control the other person. It can happen to people who are married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together, separated, or dating.

Domestic Violence

- If your partner repeatedly uses one or more of the following to control you;
  - pushing, hitting, slapping, choking, kicking, or biting threatening you, your children, other family members or pets
  - threatening suicide to get you to do something
  - using or threatening to use a weapon against you
  - keeping or taking your paycheck
  - puts you down or makes you feel bad
  - forcing you to have sex or to do sexual acts you do not want or like
  - keeping you from seeing your friends, family or from going to work

Domestic Violence

- YOU HAVE BEEN ABUSED!!
- Remember threatened or actual physical violence may be illegal. Consider calling the police for help

Cycle of Violence

Calm

- Abuser acts like the abuse never happened
- Physical abuse may not be taking place
- Promises made during 'making-up' may be met
- Victim may hope that the abuse is over
- Abuser may give gifts to victim

Tension Building

- Abuser starts to get angry
- Abuse may begin
- There is a breakdown of communication
- Victim feels the need to keep the abuser calm
- Tension becomes too much
- Victim feels like they are 'walking on egg shells'

Incident

- Any type of abuse occurs (physical/ sexual/emotional)

Making-Up

- Abuser may apologize for abuse
- Abuser may promise it will never happen again
- Abuser may blame the victim for causing the abuse
- Abuser may deny abuse took place or

How to be safe

- **Call the police**
  - If you feel you are in danger from your abuser at any time, you can call 911 or your local police. Consider the following:
  - If you are in danger when the police come, they can protect you.
  - They can help you and your children leave your home safely.
  - They can arrest your abuser when they have enough proof that you have been abused.
  - They can arrest your abuser if a personal protection order (PPO) has been violated.
  - When the police come, tell them everything the abuser did that made you call.

How to be safe

- If you have been hit, tell the police where. Tell them how many times it happened. Show them any marks left on your body. Marks may take time to show up. If you see a mark after the police leave, call the police to take pictures of the marks. They may be used in court.
- If your abuser has broken any property, show the police.
- The police can give you information on domestic violence programs and shelters.
- The police must make a report saying what happened to you. Police reports can be used in court if your abuser is charged with a crime.

How to be safe

- Get the officers' names, badge numbers, and the report number in case you need a copy of the report.
- A police report can be used to help you get a Personal protection order.
- **Get support from friends and family**
  - Tell your supportive family, friends and co-workers what has happened.
- **Find a safe place**
  - It is not fair. You should not have to leave your home because of what your abuser has done. But sometimes it is the only way you will be safe.

How to be safe

- **Get medical help**
  - If you have been hurt, go to the hospital or your doctor. Domestic violence advocates (people to help you) may be called to the hospital. They are there to give you support. You may ask medical staff to call one for you.
- Medical records can be important in court cases. They can also help you get a PPO. Give all the information about your injuries and who hurt you that you feel safe to give.
- ***Special medical concerns***
  - Sometimes you may not even know you are hurt. What seems like a small injury could be a big one.

How to be safe

- If you are pregnant and you were hit in your stomach, tell the doctor. Many abusers hurt unborn children.
- Domestic violence victims can be in danger of closed head injuries. This is because their abusers often hit them in the head. If any of these things happen after a hit to the head, get medical care right away.
  - Memory loss
    Dizziness
    Problems with eyesight
    Throwing-up
    Headache that will not go away

Warning Signs

- There is no way to tell for sure if someone is experiencing domestic violence. Those who are battered, and those who abuse, come in all personality types. Battered women are not always passive with low self-esteem, and batterers are not always violent or hateful to their partner in front of others. Most people experiencing relationship violence do not tell others what goes on at home. So how do you tell?
- Here are some signs to look for:

Injuries and Excuses:

- In some cases, bruises and injuries may occur frequently and be in obvious places. When this happens, the intent of the batterer is to keep the victim isolated and trapped at home. When black eyes and other bruising is a result of an assault, the person being battered may be forced to call in sick to work, or face the embarrassment and excuses of how the injuries occurred. In other cases, bruises and other outward injuries never occur. When there are frequent injuries seen by others, the one being battered may talk about being clumsy, or have elaborate stories of how the injuries occurred. The truth about the source of injuries will not usually be told unless the one told could be trusted and/or the one being battered wants help to end the relationship.

Absences from Work or School:

- When severe beatings or other trauma related to violence occurs, the one being battered may take time off from his/her normal schedule. If you see this happening, or the person is frequently late, this could be a sign of something (such as relationship violence) occurring.

Low Self-Esteem:

- Some battered women have low self-esteem, while others have a great deal of confidence and esteem in other areas of their life (at work, as a mother, with hobbies, etc.) but not within their relationship. In terms of dealing with the relationship, a sense of powerlessness and low self-esteem may exist. A battered woman may believe that she could not make it on her own without her partner and that she is lucky to have him in her life.

Accusations of Having Affairs:

- This is a common tactic used by batterers as an attempt to isolate their partners and as an excuse for a beating. It could include accusations of looking at other men, wanting to be with other men, or having affairs with the man bagging groceries at the local supermarket. Friends of the couple may observe this at times, but what is seen in public is usually only a small fraction of what the battered woman experiences at home.

Personality Changes:

- People may notice that a very outgoing person, for instance, becomes quiet and shy around his/her partner. This happens because the one being battered "walks on egg shells" when in the presence of the one who is abusive to her. Accusations (of flirting, talking too loudly, or telling the wrong story to someone) have taught the abused person that it is easier to act a certain way around the batterer than to experience additional accusations in the future.

Fear of Conflict:

- As a result of being battered, some may generalize the experience of powerlessness with other relationships. Conflicts with co-workers, friends, relatives, and neighbors can create a lot of anxiety. For many, it is easier to give in to whatever someone else wants than to challenge it. Asserting one's needs and desires begins to feel like a battle, and not worth the risks of losing.

Not Knowing What One Wants or How One Feels:

- For adults or children who have experienced violence from a loved one, the ability to identify feelings and wants, and to express them, may not exist. This could result in passive-aggressive behavior. Rather than telling others what you want, you say one thing but then express your anger or frustration in an aggressive manner (such as scratching his favorite car, burning dinner, or not completing a report on time for your boss).

Blaming Others for Everything:

- The abuse, which usually includes the batterer blaming others for everything that goes wrong, is usually targeted at a partner or ex-partner. For example, a simple drive somewhere could turn into a violent situation if the batterer blames the partner and/or children for getting them lost. Co-workers and relatives may observe this type of behavior, and it may be directed at others as well.

Self-blame:

- You may notice someone taking all of the blame for things that go wrong. A co-worker may share a story about something that happened at home and then take all of the blame for whatever occurred. If you notice this happening a lot, it may be a sign that one is taking all of the blame is being battered.

- **Aggressive or Care-taking Behavior in Children:** Children who live in violent homes may take that experience with them to school and to the playground. Often the class bully is a child who sees violence in his home (directed at mom, or at some or all of the children in the home). Children who seem very grown-up and are sensitive and attentive to others' needs may see violence at home as well.